

# the GREAT HEART OF Joseph



SAINT JOSEPH  
OUR PROTECTOR  
OUR FORGE

# The Great Heart of Joseph

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## ST. JOSEPH MEDAL

THE COVER shows the St. Joseph Medal. The colors indicate the virtues of humility, justice and purity. These constant colors of purple, gold and white together with its rectangular shape, rugged and masculine, preserve the memory of the St. Joseph Scapular, approved by Pope Leo XIII in 1893. At that time, the Holy Father asked the Capuchin Franciscan Order to promote devotion to St. Joseph through the Scapular. In March, 1971, in the spirit of the papal directive, the Capuchins brought out the new ST. JOSEPH MEDAL, in time for the Centennial of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church.

The petition at the bottom and the attitude of St. Joseph remind us that he is Protector of the Church. "That All May Be One" singles out a particular part of this role, the preservation and furthering of unity. This prayer and the design also suggest a petition for family unity.

The short-sleeved garment of St. Joseph and the chair on which Mary is sitting, a carpenter's handiwork, intimate the newer and growing devotion to St. Joseph the Workman.

The letters GIJM recall the valuable and well-known practice of Louis Lallemant, S.J. (1588-1635) of reflecting on daily, and asking for a share in Joseph's fidelity to Grace and the Interior Life, and in his love for Jesus and Mary.

The letters GIJM were put on the Medal at the suggestion of John Haffert, lay leader of the International Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima. St. Joseph appeared in the final vision at Fatima in 1917, and with the Child Jesus blessed the world.

The reverse side of the medal reminds us to invoke St. Joseph, Protector of the Church, on behalf of its chief shepherd on earth. The dove and inscription recall that the Holy Spirit guides the Pope in teaching divine truth. The shepherd's staff and grazing lamb and the keys are scriptural symbols of the papacy based on Matthew 16, and John 21.

A medal can be anything from an object of superstition or mere ornament to a valuable means of grace. It can be a silent encouragement in times of stress and trial, a call to virtue in temptation, a bond of union with a great personality, a symbol of loyalty and dedication.

It is hoped that the thoughts in **THE GREAT HEART OF JOSEPH** will help one wear the **ST. JOSEPH MEDAL** intelligently and fruitfully. These thoughts are directed especially at one part of the Medal, the GIJM.

G stands for Grace, I for Interior Life, J for Jesus and M for Mary. These letters may be taken as a symbol for Joseph, Patron of the Interior Life. If we think about how he

was faithful to Grace and the Interior Life, how he loved Jesus and Mary, and ask to be led the same way, we will come to understand better the Great Heart of Joseph. We will learn how to grow in the interior life.

The Heart of Jesus Himself was fashioned on the Hearts of Mary and Joseph. In His human, psychological development, Christ's identification of Himself as a boy and man came from Joseph. Joseph was the model. Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus, but was all else that father implies in the growth of a child.

There is much of Joseph in Jesus. If we learn of Joseph, there will be much of Jesus in us.

Fathers should imitate Joseph in his goodness and interior life. The family should respect and obey the father if it is to have unity. Mother and children will feel more secure, and be more lovable as they give the head of their family more of the place St. Joseph had in the Holy Family.

In the big family of the Church, the Holy Father must be respected and obeyed to insure unity and growth. The family of nations will have peace internally and among each other when there is more respect for proper authority. All those in authority will help bring about this happy time, if they follow more an interior life, if they learn to know the Great Heart of Joseph.

To spread love for St. Joseph . . .  
To win papal approval of the St. Joseph  
Medal . . .

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*“With all my heart I bless the project . . .”*

John Cardinal Wright  
Prefect, Congregation for the Clergy  
March 27, 1971

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# The Great Heart of Joseph

ST. JOSEPH is a personality of quiet greatness and strength. He stands in the dim corridors of history, silent and reserved; only a few shafts of light strike him directly. We look eagerly to see more clearly this man who was chosen to be the protector of Mary and Jesus.

There is no word of his recorded, nor any word spoken to him by another human being. Angels spoke to him three times in dream-visions and their words were written by St. Matthew. (1: 20-21; 2:13; 2:20) Joseph's answer in each case was the reply of action in accepting the angels' advice and carrying out their orders. At the angel's bidding he did not fear to take unto him Mary his wife; at his command he fled into Egypt and returned.

St. Luke tells us that Joseph was present at Bethlehem (2:16), at the Presentation in the Temple (2:33) and at the Finding in the Temple (2:48). St. John implicitly tells us that Joseph was not present at the Cross nor among the living at that time. For Christ confided Mary to the care of the beloved disciple (Jn. 19:27).

Reliable details about the life of St. Joseph are scarce. We cannot follow this great and unique man very closely through the eyes of historians. But there is a way to become better acquainted with him, to

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come to know him quite well. A famous formula for honoring St. Joseph and coming to know him was given to us by Fr. Louis Lallemant, S.J., (1588-1635). This formula shows us how to take a few known little "x's" and use them to bring us into the deep interior of St. Joseph's soul.

We usually meet the formula of Fr. Lallemant today as a plan for making a novena to St. Joseph. The modern leaflet tells us to turn to St. Joseph four times a day and to think about and pray about these four points: 1) his fidelity to grace; 2) his fidelity to the interior life; 3) his love of the Blessed Virgin; and 4) his love of the Holy Child. After reflecting on the individual point we ask God through the intercession of St. Joseph for similar fidelity and love.

Fr. Lallemant himself did not make novenas after this pattern. His was rather a daily practice. He used to pause two times in the morning, and then two times later in the day to consider and pray over the four points. If we use his formula for making a novena or as a daily practice, we need not adhere to the morning and afternoon schedule. The little meditations and prayers may be made at any time of the day. Nor is it required that the novena be made in a chapel or while kneeling. It may be made as we walk along a street or drive a car or sit on a bus, or pause between tasks at our workbench or desk. It may in

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part be attached to morning and night prayers.

Some novena leaflets print the following warning: This novena has been found to be so powerful that one is advised to make sure that he really wants what he asks for before making the request.

The warning is based on an incident in the life of Fr. Louis Lallemant. Late in life he was rector of the college at Bruges; noticing the particularly fine religious spirit of two young priests who were faculty members, he called them in and encouraged them to promote devotion to St. Joseph. He asked them especially to guide the students in a demonstration of devotion to St. Joseph on his approaching feastday. In return he promised them that he would pray to St. Joseph and obtain for them any grace that they wished. The young priests co-operated and received their requests.

The request of one of them, Fr. Ragenneau, is not known. He was a very zealous man whose advice was much sought. He later became an outstanding missionary to Canada. The other young priest, Fr. James Nouet, asked for the grace of speaking and writing well of our Lord Jesus Christ. The day after making this request, however, he came to Fr. Lallemant and said that he wished to change it, and ask for a grace he now thought more conducive to his salvation. Fr. Lallemant told him that it was

now too late. The first request had already been granted and he, Fr. Lallemant, had pledged himself for only one. It was often observed by many that Fr. Nouet did speak and write about Christ with special force and unction.

This case of the two priests is specific and individual. It shows the intimacy and power of Fr. Lallemant himself with St. Joseph. But no definite promise can be attached to each making of a novena. Fr. Lallemant's practice is powerful because it helps to acquaint a person intimately with St. Joseph. It brings us into the stream of his thoughts and the sources of his spiritual energy.

To follow the plan of Fr. Lallemant is really as good a way as any of coming to know St. Joseph in the depths of his soul. For that purpose, and to afford aid to those who wish to make the novena, some reflections on the four points are herewith offered.

### *1) Joseph's Fidelity to Grace*

Joseph was always faithful to grace. By grace we mean here the enlightenment given by God to the mind, the strength given to the will to avoid evil and do good. This is what our catechism calls actual grace.

Grace is the whispering of God in the ear, saying Do this; don't do that. Grace is the hand of God gently pushing a per-

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son in the right direction. It is always gentle; the voice never shouts; the hand never shoves. The individual must co-operate by free will. Even when men are initially converted like St. Paul who was knocked down and granted his first grace, there must still be free cooperation with a multitude of much quieter graces. Paul retired to the desert to fast and pray for a long time before beginning his active work.

St. Joseph always listened to the whisperings of grace, always went in the direction of the light prodding of its hand. This cooperation with grace began when Joseph was very young. No man becomes suddenly good. Even the great saints who have quickly turned from a life of sin to a life of holiness, earned complete holiness only after much daily cooperation with grace. St. Joseph was preparing himself though he did not know it, during all his early years, for the great task of being head of the Holy Family. He prepared himself by daily faithfulness to grace. He grew gradually to a strong spiritual stature. For one who cooperates with *all* graces, and not just with some, grows like a giant. "They will go from strength to strength; they will see the God of gods in Sion" (Ps. 83:8).

St. Joseph was not a ready-made saint. There are really none such, strictly speaking. In the early years of his life, as a boy, as a young man he cooperated with

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the graces God gave him. As a result he grew spiritually. Nobody can ever prove the story of the blossoming rod, but we can reasonably deduce the blossoming that went on in the soul of Joseph. He was not suddenly good, but grew from early innocence and the favor of God to maturity by fidelity to grace.

Almighty God had His eye on Joseph. But Joseph wasn't forced. It is always difficult to express the relationship between grace and free will; but it may not be wrong to state that Joseph could have neglected grace until he had lost favor with God to such an extent that another would have been chosen to his position in the Holy Family. He could even have gone on to eternal perdition by flagrant abuse of grace.

But Joseph cooperated. He was like the man given two or five talents who multiplied them. (Mt. 25; 14ff.) So it was finally said to him: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many." I will give you the grand task of being husband to Mary and guardian of Jesus.

This is a beautiful picture of what our lives should be, a steady going on from day to day, faithful to God's grace. Only this will ensure growth. This will ready us for whatever task God has in store for

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us. It may be that He wants us to continue in humble tasks. He may have in mind a large, noticeable work. It may be a great work we will never notice ourselves, perhaps having some influence on making a great saint of God, some special touch we can add to the development of a great light in the Church. Whatever our task may be, we will be ready for it as St. Joseph was, if we cooperate with the daily graces which God gives.

After winning the approval of God by fidelity to grace, Joseph continued in the same way as protector of the Holy Family. His ready obedience to the angels' voices shows that. He did not argue as Moses once had, or ask questions as some of the prophets had when supernaturally told to do something. He obeyed immediately. Joseph always followed grace. That is why he was a spiritual giant. The sensual-minded like to question the celibacy and purity of Joseph. He was really way ahead of any temptation. There is no reason to try to make him an old man, and so exempt him from passion. His passions were perfectly under control because his will was always firm even against the slightest deviations. Joseph was a tower of strength because the whole structure of his spiritual life was built on the firm foundation of constant cooperation with the grace of God.

In this he is an example for us who waver so often. Sometimes we are fervent,

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sometimes cold; sometimes strict, sometimes lax. Real progress and real strength come from a constant and steady working along with the graces which God gives us.

## 2. *Joseph's Fidelity to the Interior Life.*

To be faithful to the interior life means to keep the mind and heart free for God. The interior life can be lived in the midst of activities or in the silence of the desert. The quiet is in the soul. Deep within there is a calm, inner chamber where the doors are shut. Here God and the essential consciousness of the soul are always face to face.

Every man actually lives in two worlds: the exterior world in which things happen, in which he speaks and moves; and the interior world, which is the world of thought and movements of the will. The inventor, the poet, the philosopher live largely an interior life. They are occupied with their thoughts, their plans, their hopes.

But when we speak of an interior life as now applied to St. Joseph we mean a life lived in the presence of God, with mind turned to Him, and will inclined to His wishes. This living of the interior life means to have a compartment in which God and the soul are always face to face. The interior man keeps the innermost recesses of his soul for God alone. It is something like closing the door on the noise and bustle of the street and sitting down in the com-

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fort and coolness of a quiet room. The man devoted to the interior life closes the door on the rush of daily activities, closes the door even on his own problems and worries, and retires within himself. He sits down in the quiet of the inner room and is alone with His Maker.

St. Joseph developed the interior life highly. This does not mean that he was always quiet in company or very reserved. He went about his work; he took part in the ordinary affairs of social life, for we hear nothing mentioned to the contrary. He is not referred to as the recluse but as the carpenter. (Mt. 13:55) He was conscious of danger when he fled to Egypt and when he avoided the territory of Archelaus on his return. But the innermost part of him was always turned to God. His thoughts turned to God, his lips formed prayers. His will inclined to do exactly what God wanted done. He was full of confidence in God's providence.

St. Joseph learned this interior life from his earliest years. He did not have it thrust upon him, though he was very likely much inclined to it. He learned in prayer, in reflection over the words of Holy Scripture to think about God. Joseph learned as he watched the beauty of sunrise and sunset, the majesty of cloud-flecked skies; these spoke to him of God's beauty. His thoughts went from the wisdom of the things of creation to the wisdom of the Creator. He

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looked at all the living creatures of God, grass, flowers, trees, birds, animals, and marvelled at the unending life of the Creator manifested in all these creatures. When he went to the temple and witnessed the sacrifices of animals, his mind went to wrestle with the strange condition of man upon the earth, with the mystery of sinfulness and God's mercy.

From Joseph's thoughts and reflections there naturally proceeded spontaneous wishes for God's glory, that all men might come to know and love Him properly. In Joseph's soul there arose acts of thanksgiving for life, for being allowed to participate in the hymn of praise of all creation in a conscious manner. Considering how good it was for all men to accomplish the designs of God, Joseph's soul echoed with the plea later to be taught by Christ: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The interior life cannot be lived where there is a lack of order in the soul. Where there is jealousy, too much ambition, rankling bitterness or self-pity, the disturbance goes into that little room where all must be quiet. The still waters where the Spirit breathes softly are already disturbed, and the action of grace is nullified. The door to the inner room is not closed but open.

St. Joseph early in life learned this. So he subdued the motions of self-pity, jealousy, undue anger, desire for revenge. Who

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is there to say that this was not a job for him as it is for most people?

We may picture Joseph in the various situations of life both before and after his espousal to Mary, and reflect on how he always sought to maintain, to guard that inner peace of soul; how he kept the door closed so that there was always a place for just him and God to dwell together. This is being faithful to the interior life.

Joseph developed the interior life by regular prayer, by reflection on scripture and creation, by self-control and self-discipline. The waters might swirl outside, the storms might rage, but deep in his soul there was quiet and calm.

If we want to do great work for God it is not necessary to leave our occupation and jump into something else. The first thing to do is to learn the interior life. Whether our work is in the classroom, the mill, the office, on the farm, or in the kitchen makes no difference. The important thing is not the place we work in, but rather to leave a place in our soul for the Holy Spirit to work in.

### *3. Joseph's Love for Jesus*

Almost anything that can be said of the love of Joseph for Mary can be said of his love for Jesus. No child was ever more naturally deserving of or more capable of inspiring love. He was undoubtedly perfect in body and soul, with all the attractiveness

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that such perfection engenders. There was about Him, too, the air of mystery. Joseph knew that this Child was the particular gift of heaven, "the Promised One of the nations." Joseph knew that the Child committed to his care was somebody very special. He knew this from the manner of His conception and birth, from the visits of the shepherds and magi, from the warnings of the angels.

Although there was mystery, this did not keep the love of Joseph for Jesus from being everything that the love of any father for a son would be. Joseph knew the Child from earliest infancy. He had seen Him absolutely helpless in the swaddling clothes, clinging to His mother and seeking her breast for nourishment. Joseph watched the Child grow, learn to crawl, to toddle, and to walk. He helped Him to pronounce words. He answered many questions that the Child asked as He became acquainted with the world. (We must not forget that Christ learned experimentally as any human being does. The union with the Godhead did not eliminate that necessity.) So St. Joseph performed the delightful duties of every father for a son. It is in these intimate dealings that love is nurtured and grows.

Joseph along with Mary had the joy of noticing their own ways of speaking and acting in the Child. Christ learned from them, and doubtless there were many times

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when Joseph and Mary reminded each other: "He does that just like you." No doubt Christ had a Galilean accent, but His finer inflections were copied from Mary and Joseph. The heart of the foster-father swelled with honest joy as he watched and listened. "Here is part of myself in that wonderful Child," he could say to himself.

As the Child grew older Joseph taught Him the carpenter's trade. Here he had the joy of watching an intelligent, eager pupil learn. Anybody who has ever taught knows what a pleasure it is to have a pupil who is eager and intelligent. This helps to foster a love on the part of the teacher for the pupil. Joseph also had this motive for love.

Joseph had above all the wonderful virtue of the Child to marvel at and to stir up the deepest feelings of love and devotion in himself. Joseph with his own well-developed spiritual sense could see something of the soul of his foster-son. It made him reverence the boy, rounded out his love with sentiments of highest regard and tenderness. This Boy was not just handsome, apt, intelligent, but so wrapt up in an indefinable closeness to God that He inspired the most wonderful love in anyone who knew Him well. Joseph had every opportunity to know Him.

On at least two occasions Joseph also had known the fear of losing the Child.

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Once he had to take the Child and flee into Egypt; the second time he had to seek for three days before finding the Boy in the temple. Something precious that is almost lost becomes doubly dear. Any father who has had the worry of losing a son by sickness will love him all the more when he has recovered. When the time of danger and the fear of loss were over, Joseph knew His foster-child as doubly dear.

St. Joseph did not have the closeness of real paternity and the natural love that flows from it. But perhaps his love was greater because of what the angel had said: "That which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit." (Mt. 1:20) The ordinary father is deeply interested in his child because he knows the child is a part of himself. Joseph had the more unusual basis of interest of knowing that this Child was begotten of the Holy Spirit and entrusted to him. A father may look at a child and think: This is my very own flesh and blood. Joseph could look at Jesus and think: Who has been so favored as myself to have a child given to provide for, who is higher than my own flesh and blood?

Joseph was not the real father, but it is true to say that no father ever had a more fatherly heart for a son than Joseph did for Jesus.

#### 4. *Joseph's Love for Mary*

The love of Joseph for his wife was not

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something ethereal and indefinable. It had in it rather all the elements that go to make up the love of a man for a woman, except the element of bodily passion. The Blessed Mother was not for Joseph a statue on a pedestal. She was a person on a pedestal, one whom he admired greatly and revered. At the same time she was a person with whom he lived and spoke to intimately.

Ordinarily nobody thinks of Joseph as a great lover. In fact, we hesitate to use the word since it is so often mis-used to describe a man of great passion. The love of Joseph for Mary was not passionate. Still it was not devoid of feeling. Joseph's love for Mary had in it all the great, good, enduring elements that are included in the word love. It was a tender love, alive to her smallest wishes, responding to her joy or her sorrow. Joseph would be quick to note the shadow in the eyes of Mary that betokened a sadness over some event of the day. He would just as quickly note the sparkle that meant she had something especially happy on her mind.

All human love grows with companionship. Two people who are often brought together get to know each other's mind, disposition, and moods quite completely. We can often tell from a slight movement the whole train of thought of an intimate companion. We know just how to interpret

a mood, how far to go with a joke. In living together there comes understanding and love.

Joseph came to know the thoughts, disposition and character of Mary. His understanding of her and his love for her grew.

The Blessed Virgin was easy to love. In her character and disposition there were not the jarring, disconcerting evidences of selfishness in any form. Selfishness is usually what destroys a budding love. Everything that Mary did or said was apt to please. Seeing all this, getting to know day by day the worth of her to whom he was husband and protector, Joseph's admiration and feelings of highest regard grew daily deeper.

When Joseph went about his daily work he carried with him the beautiful image of a woman of perfect goodness. As the day grew long he looked forward to the time of being with Mary again. They could exchange the thoughts and experiences of the day.

Joseph knew above all that he was a lucky man, that he was not worthy of the wife given to him. This made his love for Mary worshipful and humble. These elements must always be in any great love. Joseph knew that, try as he might, he would always fall short of the full appreciation due to his wife.

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Joseph knew the special likes of Mary. It is not too much to suppose that he catered to them. He was not just the protector, the provider, but the husband who remembered to bring in an early flower for his wife, who anticipated her request perhaps to make something for some widow in the town, or for some poor or sick person who was the object of her charity.

Yet there was about Mary something of mystery. Her meditations and thoughts went deeper than his own. She was the mother of his foster-child, the child who had come in such a mysterious way. Mary was the mother favored by God. Joseph never forgot these things. He never intruded on this area of privacy. He maintained a reserve, not a reserve filled with curiosity, but a reserve that knew only respect. In every great human love, there is a reserve; there is a sacred ground left for the privacy of the personality of the one loved. The truly great lover does not trod on this ground. His love makes him respect and keep back rather than demand. The element of mystery remains, and that is what keeps the relationship of two people constantly fascinating.

Intimate understanding and mystery mingle in love. In Joseph there was a deep understanding of his wife, yet the mystery of her was extreme. She was always somebody he knew well and yet was barely acquainted with. So his love knew no tedium.

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Living with Mary was ever delightful and exhilarating.

We might pause to think of what such a love would do for Joseph himself. He was a man who had grown by fidelity to grace and to the interior life. He was a spiritual giant before he came to know Mary. The effect of this great love for the most perfect of women made the soul of Joseph, already great, develop in fineness and beauty. If he was a diamond before, now he became a diamond cut to the most delicate points as the result of the polishing that came from living with and loving the most chosen of the daughters of Eve.

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The formula of Fr. Louis Lallement for honoring St. Joseph and coming to know him has many possibilities. It helps us to go to Joseph with much confidence. It helps us to go to Joseph as to one we understand and love.

In ancient Egypt it was said of another who bore the name Joseph: Go to Joseph. (Gen. 41:55) He was the one who distributed food in the years of famine. In necessity today we say again: Go to Joseph. He had in life the most unique position in regard to Mary and Jesus. In heaven he has an unusual position of influence. Go to Joseph with confidence. He will help you in your necessities.

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Go to Joseph especially to learn how to live with God and to save your own soul. He will teach you fidelity to grace and the interior life. Above all he will teach you how to love Mary and Jesus. We do not really come to know St. Joseph until we reflect upon and study his love for his wife and foster-son. But as we do this we find out that by going to Joseph, we necessarily come to a greater understanding and love of Mary and Jesus. And so, for help in the spiritual famine of our souls we can only say with renewed conviction: Go to Joseph.



### PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH PATRON OF THE CHURCH

“O St. Joseph! Always be our protector. May your inner spirit of peace, of silence, of good work, and of prayer for the cause of Holy Church always be an inspiration to us and bring us joy in union with your blessed spouse, our most sweet and gentle and Immaculate Mother, and in the strong yet tender love of Jesus, the glorious and immortal King of all ages and peoples. Amen.”

*Prayer by Pope John XXIII at the close of his Apostolic Letter, March 19, 1961, making St. Joseph Patron of the Second Vatican Council.*

## THE ST. JOSEPH MEMORARE

Remember, O most pure spouse of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, my beloved patron, that never was it heard that anyone invoked your protection and sought your aid without being comforted. Inspired by this confidence, I come to you and fervently commend myself to you. Despise not my petition, dear foster-father of our Redeemer, but accept it graciously. Amen.

*(partial indulgence  
Raccolta no. 434)*

## PRAYER FOR A HAPPY DEATH

Saint Joseph, guide me on my way,  
Protect my soul from harm.  
And if this journey ends today,  
Please come with Mary and her Son  
And take me to your Home to stay.

A request for more information about the ST. JOSEPH MEDAL or a freewill offering to obtain one may be sent to:

ST. JOSEPH MEDAL  
4121 Harewood Road N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20017



